

# ASSOCIATION FOR WORLD EDUCATION WORLD UNION FOR PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM

UNHR Council: 8<sup>th</sup> Session (2-18 June 2008): President: Ambassador Doru Romulus Costea.  
Speaker: AWE Representative David G. LITTMAN. Monday (a.m.) 16 June 2008

## Item 7: Human rights violations ... particularly in the Gaza Strip (HAMAS)

Sir, in the final Report of Special Rapporteur John Dugard, we note his opinion that the UN should withdraw from the Quartet. He also rejects the Quartet's Road Map. [In his words: "*the road map is an inappropriate and unhelpful framework for negotiations.*" (A/HRC/7/17 of 21 January 2008, §56)].

Instead of finding a way forward in an environment of negotiation and international commitments to end terror – as in the Road Map – he refers to "*the seizure of power in Gaza by Hamas in June 2007, followed by the seizure of power in the West Bank by Fatah*" – and to "*the internecine conflict resulting in the deaths of several hundred Palestinians, mostly belonging to Fatah.*" He then stated: "*there is no immediate prospect of reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah.*" [§49]

Currently, there are several efforts to find a framework for negotiations among Palestinian groups, between Israel and Syria, and with Hamas via Egyptian efforts, which it is hoped will lead to more direct discussions between the parties, thus avoiding a regional catastrophe.

However, reconciliation depends on an end to the demonization of the other. Instead, in the midst of this conflict among Palestinians and between Palestinians and Israelis, we find stereotypes, falsehoods and demonization of "the Other" in school textbooks and TV programs for children and youth. The indoctrination of youth insures that tensions carry over into the future. There is a special danger of the maintenance of such stereotypes when they are incorporated in documents that serve as a foundational presentation of the Hamas movement such as its 1988 Charter which, *inter alia*, has a preamble quoting the founder of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, Hassan al-Banna saying: "*Israel will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it.*" Article 13 is unconditionally opposed to any 'peace negotiations'. And its article 28 is global: "*Israel, Judaism and Jews challenge Islam and the Muslim people: 'May the cowards never sleep.'*"

We are making available a joint written statement: The 1988 Covenant of the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement – Hamas [E/CN.4/2006/NGO/239: by Association for World Education, Association of World Citizens, World Union for Progressive Judaism, International Humanist and Ethical Union, Simon Wiesenthal Center, International Council of Jewish Women.]

Thus, we welcome the statement in the final Report of the High Commissioner [A/HRC/8/17, of 6 June] that Hamas has confirmed its commitment to respect "*international law and international humanitarian law insofar as they conform with our character, customs and original traditions.*"

We must hope that the "*character, customs and original traditions*" [to which then Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniya referred on 17 March 2007 before the Palestinian Legislative Council] do, in fact, support universally recognised international and humanitarian law. Such law must be clearly set out and then serve as a basis for action in this specific context.

Thus, we sincerely hope that a Council resolution under agenda item 7 will be well balanced this time, will condemn all forms of violence – including against the remnant Christian community – and will call for an end to the overall culture of hate and death which has marked the recent past. Sir, none of us should 'sleep' or behave as 'cowards' when addressing this tragedy in Gaza.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Case Postale 205 – 1196 Gland – Suisse